

2.6 The Deputy of St. John of the Deputy Chief Minister regarding the emergency exercise held several weeks earlier:

Would the Minister give brief details of the emergency exercise that was held several weeks ago, including the number of personnel involved across all services, whether it was considered successful, whether private organisations participated in the exercise, did the Island Honorary Police play an active part and, as the scenario was a plane crash, which department took overall responsibility?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (Deputy Chief Minister - rapporteur):

I am advised that Exercise Front took place on 13th January and involved a multi-agency response to a scenario of a simultaneous emergency located at the airport and St. Aubin's Bay following a mid-air collision. The purpose of the exercise was to test the Island's preparedness in the event of such an emergency. This exercise was also a requirement for the re-ratification of the Airport Civil Aviation Authority license. All emergency services, including the Honorary Police, participated. States departments, voluntary organisations and members of the public: around 300 individuals were involved in the day's activities including 15 Honorary Police. The States of Jersey Police take the lead in such incidents and convened a strategic co-ordination group drawn up from the emergency services and other relevant agencies, to assist command control and communication.

[10:45]

A formal structured debrief process is underway and initial findings highlighted the need to improve the clarity and role and responsibilities and the involvement of, particularly, the tasking of the Honorary Police. In addition, the handling of radio communications and the handling of the media also need to be looked into. Following the debrief, recommendations will be submitted to the Emergency Planning Board for their consideration. This was the largest live exercise the Island has ever taken to date and the early indications are very encouraging, that the Island has had a valuable opportunity to learn and to test itself in the event of a major incident. As with all exercises such as these, it is important to learn the lessons and to ensure that all participants are able to feed-back with their constructive comments.

2.6.1 The Deputy of St. John:

Given the Honorary Police were involved, and the number was considerably more than 15, can the Minister explain why sworn police officers were refused admission to the crash site by G4 staff while bus loads of other personnel were allowed through unhindered? Is the Chief Minister happy that the fiasco which occurred on his watch - or on his colleague's watch in this case because he is answering on behalf of his colleague - the fiasco that occurred on the watch, will he be carrying out additional exercises in the future, and also will he be seeing that the Civil Emergency Officer gets the necessary training so that he can lead an operation of this nature?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I discussed this matter with the Chief Minister before he departed and he wanted me to say that he agrees that there are lessons to be learnt in relation to the emergency exercise. Particularly, the communication and the role and responsibilities and the tasking of the Honorary Police and he is going to be following up on his return, and certainly it is going to be a matter which is going to be discussed at the Emergency Board. Clearly, it is vital that these exercises take place. It is almost a positive thing

that things are identified so that improvements can be made, not only in the handling of the Honorary Police, but in other areas too.

2.6.2 Deputy C.H. Egré of St. Peter:

Having a great deal of experience in the field of emergency management, and in particular the aviation element, I was invited at the last exercise to be an observer. I have to say that privilege was not given to me on this particular case. Could the Minister (1) indicate which particular Scrutiny Panel is responsible for reviewing emergency planning and (2) would he make available to me to review the paperwork involved in the build-up to the exercise, the exercise itself, the hot debrief and the final debrief?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I believe that the Civil Emergencies Department now has moved to the Chief Minister's Department and, therefore, it is the responsibility and under the purview of the Corporate Affairs Scrutiny Panel to review any matters in this area. I know that the Deputy of St. Peter has a strong interest in emergency planning and I am sure that the civil emergency officers would be more than happy to benefit from his experience and for any observations and opportunities for improvement that he has to recommend to hear them.

2.6.3 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

That was my question, please forgive me through the Chair, Sir, to the Minister if he already indicated in his answer, it was rather long and I did not catch 100 per cent of it. I was trying to see, and ask, which politicians, if any, were involved in the political oversight of the exercise.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

The Emergency Planning Board consists of a number of Ministers including the Chief Minister, I believe the Minister for Economic Development, the Minister for Transport and Technical Services, the Minister for Home Affairs. There are a number of Ministers that sit on the board. I do not, I am the stand-in when the Chief Minister is absent and I am aware that the Emergency Planning Board will be considering a full report in relation to the lessons learnt. But I have to say that I think it is a positive thing that such a comprehensive exercise is carried out and that lessons are being learnt in order that in the unfortunate event of an emergency happening, we are well equipped... and all agencies respond and communicate and work effectively together.

Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

So, is the answer that there were no political representatives during the exercise? Should there not be political representatives there during such an exercise in the future?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I am advised that 12 political observers were engaged. I know that the Chief Minister attended. I understand that the Minister for Health and Social Services, that the Minister with responsibility for the airport - Senator Routier - was there and also the exercise benefited from a review by His Excellency, the Lieutenant Governor.

2.6.4 The Deputy of St. John:

In response to a question raised earlier, will the Minister be making the report public that is being carried out? Also, can he tell us whether or not the press or the media were permitted access to all areas during the exercise, in other words, so as to be able to keep people honest?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

Certainly I am more than happy to discuss with the Chief Minister the publication of a report to Members after the Emergency Board has discussed it, and I am afraid to say I do not understand the Deputy's question about honesty.

The Deputy of St. John:

Can I put it in a slightly different way? When an exercise in the past - of which I have been involved in quite a number - has been held, the media have been permitted to cover all areas and see exactly what is going on. On this occasion was that the case, or was it not?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

The truthful answer is I do not know. I will find out and respond back to the Deputy. I understand that the media are important partners in relation to dealing with a civil emergency. They also have a role of scrutiny in order to ensure that the general public knows what is going on. I do understand that the particular circumstances at the airport and the particular security issues that are relevant in relation to running an airport may have prevented some of that on this occasion with this emergency.